

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION PM-04

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03
CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 MC-02 IGA-02 ACDA-07 /055 W
-----170053Z 030036 /64

R 161045Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7744
SECDEF
INFO CINCPAC
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SINGAPORE 2085

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, SN
SUBJECT: I-HAWK FOR SINGAPORE

REF: USDAO 120327Z MAY 77

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

1. SUMMARY. MINISTRY OF DEFENSE HAS SENT DAO A LETTER REQUESTING PURCHASE OF THE HAWK AIR DEFENSE MISSILE SYSTEM PRICED AT APPROXIMATELY \$50 MILLION. THE PURCHASE IS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT IN GOS EFFORT TO BUILD A CREDIBLE AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM AS PART OF THE OVERALL DEFENSE PLAN FOR THE REPUBLIC. GIVEN SINGAPORE'S KEEN SENSE OF VULNERABILITY TO AERIAL ATTACK, THE ACQUISITION OF THE I-HAWK SHOULD PROVIDE THE GOS A CERTAIN MEASURE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL REASSURANCE AND MAY PROVE TO BE A USEFUL ACQUISITION IN THE EVENT A SERIOUS THREAT WERE TO MATERIALIZE. IN VIEW OF SINGAPORE'S SMALL SIZE AND THE ESSENTIALLY DEFENSIVE NATURE OF THE I-HAWK, THE EMBASSY DOES NOT BELIEVE ITS ACQUISITION WILL PROVE TO BE EITHER A DESTABILIZING FACTOR IN THE REGION OR UPSET U.S.

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BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. ON THE OTHER HAND, U.S. REFUSAL TO SELL THE I-HAWK WOULD HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON U.S.-SINGAPORE RELATIONS AND U.S. INTERESTS IN SINGAPORE. THEREFORE THE EMBASSY SUPPORTS THE GOS REQUEST AND RECOMMENDS APPROPRIATE LOAS BE PREPARED AND SUBMITTED FOR GOS CONSIDERATION. END SUMMARY.

2. REFTEL INFORMED ADDRESSEES THAT MINDEF HAS SENT LETTER TO DAO DATED MAY 9, 1977 REQUESTING FMS CASH PURCHASE OF ONE BATTERY AND ASSAULT UNIT OF IMPROVED HAWK AIR DEFENSE MISSILE SYSTEM. THE TOTAL PRICE OF THE ITEMS OF I-HAWK HARDWARE REQUESTED WILL BE APPROXIMATELY \$50 MILLION.

3. AS REFTEL STATED GOS HAS DECIDED TO REPLACE ITS CURRENT UK BLOODHOUND SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILE SYSTEM, WHICH WILL REACH THE END OF ITS SERVICE LIFE BY 1981, WITH A MORE MODERN AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM. THE I-HAWK WILL PROVIDE A LOW-TO-MEDIUM ALTITUDE AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM WHICH FILLS A FUTURE GAP IN SINGAPORE'S OVERALL AIR DEFENSES. THE CURRENT ACQUISITION OF F-5S WILL PROVIDE AIR DEFENSE AT HIGHER ALTITUDES.

4. THE GOS DECISION TO PURCHASE THE I-HAWK REPRESENTS A CONTINGENCY EFFORT AGAINST AN UNKNOWN FUTURE THREAT. AS ADDRESSEES ARE AWARE THERE IS NO PRESENT THREAT OF AERIAL ATTACK AGAINST SINGAPORE. MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA ARE FELLOW MEMBERS OF ASEAN, ENJOY RELATIVELY FRIENDLY BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH SINGAPORE AND DO NOT POSSESS ANY SIGNIFICANT CAPABILITY TO CARRY OUT AN AERIAL ASSAULT AGAINST SINGAPORE. VIETNAM'S INTENTIONS ARE LESS CLEAR, BUT ANY POTENTIAL THREAT FROM THE SRV WOULD PROBABLY INVOLVE SUPPORT FOR GUERRILLA WARFARE AND NOT EMPLOY AERIAL ATTACK.

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5. WHY THEN DOES THE GOS FEEL COMPELLED TO PURCHASE THE I-HAWK? EVER SINCE THE JAPANESE CONQUEST OF SINGAPORE IN WORLD WAR II, SINGAPOREANS HAVE FELT EXCEPTIONALLY VULNERABLE TO EXTERNAL ATTACK. PRIME MINISTER LEE KUAN YEW AS WELL AS THE OTHER LEADERS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF HIS GENERATION HAVE NEVER FORGOTTEN THE JAPANESE BOMBING OF SINGAPORE AND THEIR DESIRE FOR AN EFFECTIVE AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM SPRINGS IN PART FROM THIS EXPERIENCE. THE OTHER PRINCIPAL REASON WAS BEST EXPRESSED THREE YEARS AGO BY MINISTER OF DEFENSE GOH TO SOME VISITING MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE, AND HAS SINCE BEEN REITERATED BY KEY MINDEF PERSONNEL ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS. WHEN ASKED TO EXPLAIN THE THREAT WHICH PROMPTED SINGAPORE'S DECISION TO GIVE HIGH PRIORITY TO BUILDING AN EFFICIENT NATIONAL DEFENSE FORCE, DR. GOH REPLIED THAT THE HISTORY OF SOUTHEAST ASIA HAD BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY SUDDEN CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT. THEREFORE, WHILE THE GOS ENJOYED FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH KUALA LUMPUR AND JAKARTA, IT COULD NOT ASSUME THAT THIS WOULD ALWAYS BE THE CASE. THEREFORE, SINGAPORE HAD TO PREPARE

AGAINST THE WORST POSSIBLE CONTINGENCY.

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INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03
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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 SINGAPORE 2085

6. THE PURCHASE OF THE I-HAWK IN ADDITION TO THE SQUADRON OF F-5ES WILL GIVE SINGAPORE A RELATIVELY CREDIBLE AIR DEFENSE. THEORETICALLY IT WOULD ALSO PERMIT THE GOS TO ENGAGE IN OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS AGAINST HOSTILE GOVERNMENTS WITH REATER ASSURANCE THAT ITS HOME FRONT WAS WELL DEFENDED -- THUS POSSIBLY ALTERING THE PRESENT BALANCE OF FORCES IN THE REGION. HOWEVER, WE DO NOT THINK THIS PURCHASE WILL HAVE A DESTABILIZING IMPACT ON THE REGION. SINGAPORE IS SO SMALL THE VULNERABLE, HAS OBVIOUSLY SO MUCH TO LOSE BY ENGAGING IN OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS THAT WE DO NOT THINK SINGAPORE'S NEIGHBORS WOULD REACT NEGATIVELY TO A GOS DECISION TO PURCHASE THE I-HAWK TO REPLACE AN EXISTING SURFACE TO AIR MISSILE SYSTEM WITH MORE MODERN EQUIPMENT EXCEPT PERHAPS FOR A TWINGE OF ENVY THAT THE GOS (WITH OVER THREE BILLION DOLLARS IN FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESERVES) CAN EASILY AFFORD TO BUY IT. THEY MIGHT EVEN TAKE SOME COMFORT FROM THE FACT THAT THE I-HAWK HAS A RANGE OF ONLY 11 KILOMETERS AS COMPARED WITH THE 80 KILOMETER RANGE OF THE BLOODHOUNDS AND COULD BECOME A COMPATIBLE PART OF THE INTEGRATED AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM UNDER THE FIVE POWER DEFENSE AGREEMENT. THE SRV WOULD NOT BE LIKELY TO VIEW SUCH

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A DEFENSIVE WEAPONS AS A THREAT NOR WOULD IT REGARD IT AS A DETERRENT TO THE TYPE OF GUERILLA WARFARE IT MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO PROMOTE. GIVEN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES WE DO NOT BELIEVE THIS ACQUISITION WOULD SERIOUSLY UPSET SINGAPORE'S NEIGHBORS OR U.S. RELATIONS WITH ANY OF THE COUNTRIES OF SEA. HOWEVER, EMBASSIES KUALA LUMPUR AND JAKARTA ARE IN A MUCH BETTER POSITION TO COMMENT ON THIS POINT AND MAY WISH TO DO SO.

7. GIVEN GOS BASIC CONCERN OVER ITS VULNERABILITY TO AERIAL ATTACK, EMBASSY BELIEVES THE ACQUISITION OF THE I-HAWK WILL PROVIDE THE GOS WITH A CERTAIN MEASURE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL REASSURANCE WHICH MAY CAUSE IT TO ACT WITH A GREATER DEGREE OF CALM AND CONFIDENCE IN ITS DEALINGS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS. FURTHERMORE, ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO PRESENT THREAT AGAINST SINGAPORE WHICH NECESSITATES THE ACQUISITION OF THE I-HAWK, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT SOME CONTINGENCY MAY ARISE WHICH MAY MAKE IT A USEFUL ACQUISITION. IF THE U.S. REFUSES TO SELL THE GOS THE I-HAWK, IT WOULD HAVE UNDOUBTEDLY A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON U.S.-SINGAPORE RELATIONS. THE GOS INTEREST IN ACQUIRING THE I-HAWK DATES BACK TO 1967, AND IN APRIL 1975 THE U.S. EXTENDED A LICENSE TO RAYTHEON TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL DATA ON THE I-HAWK TO THE GOS IN CONNECTION WITH ITS EFFORT TO PROMOTE THE SALE OF THIS SYSTEM. ANY DECISION BY THE U.S. AT THIS POINT TO DENY A SALE WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BE MISUNDERSTOOD BY THE GOS AND COULD IMPACT ADVERSELY ON U.S. INTERESTS IN SINGAPORE.

8. AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, GOS CURRENTLY PERMITS C-141 MAC SUPPORT FLIGHTS TO STAGE THROUGH SINGAPORE AND P-3 FLIGHTS TO OVERFLY SINGAPORE. WE HAVE REQUESTED AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF C-141 FLIGHTS AND AT SOME POINT WE MAY SEEK ADDITIONAL ACCESS FOR OUR MILITARY AIRCRAFT TO USE SINGAPORE'S FACILITIES. UNITS OF THE

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7TH FLEET CONTINUE TO USE THE NAVAL BASIN AND THE BUNKERING/REPAIR FACILITIES AT SEMBAWANG. WHILE OUR USE OF THESE FACILITIES IS CONSONANT WITH SINGAPORE'S PERCEPTION OF ITS OWN INTERESTS, THE GOS WILL BE LESS INCLINED TO ACCOMMODATE SPECIAL REQUESTS FOR ADDITIONAL USE OF SINGAPORE'S FACILITIES IF WE ARE UNWILLING TO RESPOND FAVORABLY TO THE GOS REQUEST TO PURCHASE THE I-HAWK.

9. IN VIEW OF THE ABOVE FACTORS, EMBASSY/DAO SUPPORTS THE GOS REQUEST TO PURCHASE THE I-HAWK AND RECOMMENDS

APPROPRIATE LOAS BE PREPARED AND FORWARDED FOR GOS
CONSIDERATION.
GRANT

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Channel Indicators: n/a
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2503668
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: I-HAWK FOR SINGAPORE
TAGS: MASS, MPOL, SN
To: STATE DOD
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/0f53be92-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009